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NEWS RELEASE

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Court of Appeal Launches ‘Outreach Plus,’ New Program for High School Students

Riverside—A new court-community outreach program called “Outreach Plus” will soon be launched by the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, to improve public understanding of the courts and to encourage students to stay in school, Presiding Justice Manuel A. Ramirez announced today.

The special court session will begin at 9 a.m. on Thursday, January 13, 2005, at Pacific High School, San Bernardino. The court’s seven justices will hear oral argument in two criminal cases and will conduct a 30-minute question-and-answer session for almost 200 students.

Afterward, the justices will join with volunteer lawyers from the San Bernardino County Bar Association to visit classrooms to remind students of the importance of staying in high school and going to college. About 1,000 high school students are involved in the entire program.

In this unique outreach effort, the court, local bar, and school leadership plan to address the high school dropout rate, which was 12.7 percent statewide for the 2002–2003 school year, according to the California Department of Education, but has been estimated by the Pacific Research Institute to be as high as 30 percent statewide.

“The high school dropout rate estimated by the California Department to Education translates into almost 60,000 former students in California destined for higher unemployment, lower wages, and poorer health,” noted Presiding Justice Ramirez. The school administration, court, and bar hope that “Outreach Plus” will be a model for similar programs statewide.

The program is a collaboration of the Court of Appeal and the bar association with Arturo Delgado, Ed.D., Superintendent of the San Bernardino Unified School District, and Kenneth Martinez, Principal of Pacific High School, and with the support of Herbert R. Fischer, Ph.D., San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools.

The program marks the first time that Division Two has conducted oral argument in San Bernardino County since 1999, when the court moved from that location to its current headquarters in Riverside. It is also the first community outreach program of its kind in San Bernardino County. The Fourth Appellate District's Division One (San Diego) recently collaborated with the state Supreme Court to sponsor an annual outreach program that involved 1,200 high school and law school students in San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Cases to Be Argued

The first appeal to be argued concerns a defendant's conviction for discharge of a firearm at a building. Counsel will argue that the jury should have been instructed in two facts of law: the defendant had to have targeted the building to deserve such a conviction, and the jury could decide to convict the defendant of the lesser offense of negligent discharge of a firearm.

In the second appeal, the jury found the defendant guilty of robbery, but counsel will argue that the defendant was not the robber and that the trial court erred by excluding the defense expert's testimony that would have helped the defense cast doubt on the eyewitness testimony.

The Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, hears appeals from the superior courts in Inyo, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. The San Bernardino County Bar Association is California's oldest continuously operating bar association, having served the Inland Empire's legal community and the public for 130 years.

The Pacific High School administration and faculty serve a culturally diverse student body of 2,500 with a full range of college preparatory courses, honors, advanced placement classes, and innovative educational services such as preparation of underserved and underachieving students for college.

For more information, call Henry Espinoza, Assistant Clerk/Administrator, Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, at 951-248-0200.

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